

## **March 29, 2013 Meeting Minutes**

**On Friday, March 29, 2013, the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative was called to order by Director Janet Coit for its seventh formal meeting (first meeting of 3rd year) at approximately 2:10 p.m. at the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, 235 Promenade Street, Room 300, Providence, Rhode Island.**

**In attendance were:**

### **Collaborative Members**

**Janet Coit, Director of DEM**

**Mike Walker, Senior Project Manager, EDC**

**Robert Ballou, Assistant to the Director, DEM**

**Ken Ayars, Chief of Agriculture DEM**

**Alli Rogers, Department of Administration**

**Ernest Julian, Department of Health**

### **Advisory Council Members**

**Ryan Clark, Vice President, The Town Dock**

**Mike McGiveney, President Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association**

**Hirotsugu Uchida, Assistant Professor, URI**

**Lori Pivarnik, URI Food and Nutrition**

## **Others**

**Rayna Maguire, Assistant to the Director, RIDEM**

**Noah Fulmer, Director of Farm Fresh RI**

**Sarah Schumann, working with Farm Fresh RI**

**Representative Peter Martin, House of Representatives, District 75  
(Newport)**

**Steven Anderson, Vice President, Rhode Island Party and Charter  
Boat Association**

**Katrina White, Travel Trade Manager, EDC**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Director Coit announced that the Senate Fisheries Task Force met last month. At that meeting, DEM was asked to speak about status and trends in the world of fisheries and seafood. DEM highlighted the activities of the Seafood Marketing Collaborative at that meeting.**

**Director Coit provided an update on the new Rhode Island Seafood branding logo. The logo will be officially announced on Ag Day, on April 25. The regulations pertaining to the logo will be going out to public comment soon. The logo cannot be used until after the regulations are finalized, later this year.**

**Director Coit announced that DEM and the Town of Narragansett**

recently received a large grant (\$2.9 million) from the US Economic Development Corporation to invest in improvements to the port of Galilee. The State will be matching those grant funds.

Director Coit mentioned that a bill is being considered in the General Assembly to make calamari Rhode Island's official state appetizer. Bob Ballou testified on this bill last week on behalf of DEM. Director Coit suggested that despite some negative attention on talk radio, this bill is a great opportunity to promote the kind of things promoted by the Seafood Marketing Collaborative.

Director Coit announced that \$100,000 has been allocated in the State budget for seed money for the Rhode Island Agriculture and Seafood Marketing Grant program. There are nonprofits who are interested in matching that money.

Director Coit announced that deadline to spend the Van Beuren Foundation grant (which funds support work for the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative) has been extended from December 31, 2012, until June 30, 2013. The grant has been transferred from Rhode Island Rural Development Council to Farm Fresh RI, and is now being overseen by Noah Fulmer.

The annual report is due on April 30. Sarah Schumann is in charge of putting this together; everyone is welcome to contribute suggestions. DEM will come up with an interactive electronic platform to

**collaborative on this report.**

**Director Coit announced her intent to send out a survey for feedback on where participants would like to see the Seafood Marketing Collaborative go in the future.**

## **2. BRANDING PROGRAM**

**Bob Ballou and Ken Ayars provided an update on the branding logo program. DEM has worked with their legal department to develop regulations pertaining to use of the new logo by businesses. Noah Fulmer is working on trademarking the logo. The goal is to roll out the logo on Ag Day at the Statehouse (although it won't be possible for businesses to apply the logo until the regulations are officially in place).**

**Draft regulations -- The language in the regulations draws on established language in state law, much of it from agricultural regulations. The most important part is that a brand will be established and will be owned by DEM, can be used with permission, and can only be taken away due to misuse. In contrast to agricultural marketing, only dealers will be authorized to make the initial application of the logo. The penalty for misusing the logo is a criminal penalty, based on the recommendation of the DEM legal office. In addition, this regulation makes it illegal to mislabel seafood in general (whether or not the logo is used). Specifically, it is now illegal**

to label one species with the name of another (e.g., calling skate scallops).

## **Comments –**

**Mike Walker** asked why a restaurant needs written authorization to use the logo, since the logo is already on a product when purchased from an authorized dealer. **Bob Ballou** answered that this language was based on the advice of legal counsel who suggested it was necessary to protect and control the brand.

**Lori Pivarnik** asked what would happen if on day one, a restaurant buys Rhode Island seafood and puts the logo on their menu and then on day two, they use the logo but don't use Rhode Island seafood. In this instance, the customer will continue to assume that it is Rhode Island seafood, when it is in fact not Rhode Island Seafood. **Ernest Julian** responded that DOH is aware that mislabeling occurs, and agree that this will be an issue. However, he noted that DOH does have the resources to police mislabeling.

**Mike Walker** remarked that businesses outside of Rhode Island will not know that they're supposed to obtain written authorization to reapply the logo.

**Mike McGiveney** asked how the logo will be affixed to packaging.

**Bob Ballou said that when DEM develops fisheries regulations, it puts them out to public comment with several different options. We could include several different options for the Rhode Island Seafood logo regulations as well.**

**Bob Ballou mentioned that DEM has already received a comment suggesting that commercial fishermen should also be able to apply the logo to their product, prior to delivering it to a dealer.**

**Discussion ensued about where in the supply chain the logo can/should be applied.**

**Ken Ayars asked if participants would like to discuss the issue of civil vs. criminal penalties. The DEM legal office recommended the choice of a criminal penalty.**

**Mike McGiveney suggested adding the word “knowingly” to the language describing what constitutes a violation.**

### **3. FARM FRESH RI**

**Noah Fulmer introduced himself to the group. Farm Fresh RI has taken over the Van Beuren Charitable Foundation grant to support the work of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative. Noah mentioned several initiatives that Farm Fresh RI is working on in**

conjunction with this work.

**Hospitals -- Healthcare without Harm** has been holding conversations with the group that coordinates hospitals in Rhode Island. One of the things they are working on is getting Rhode Island seafood into hospitals. They will be working with Sysco, which has an approved relationship with Red's Best out of Boston. They are working to identify a species to use for a pilot project, and they are leaning towards choosing skate wing.

**Poster -- Farm Fresh** has worked with a graphic artist to design a visually appealing poster showing the seasonality of Rhode Island seafood. The purpose of this is to educate consumers, chefs, and others about the variety of seafood caught by local boats. This poster will be given to classrooms. Farm Fresh will use grant funds to print posters and distribute them. Rep Peter Martin suggested making sure that all Rhode Island ports (not just Pt Judith) are represented.

**Restaurant survey -- Katrina White** has been working with JWU interns to survey restaurants about their local seafood purchasing practices. They are posting the results on the marketplace of the [www.seafoodRI.com](http://www.seafoodRI.com) website. Unfortunately, due to the timing of things, there won't be any link between the restaurants that are authorized to use the logo and the restaurants that are listed on the website marketplace. That issue may be addressed at a later date.

**Sarah Schumann clarified that there are two issues associated with posting these listings. One is that there is no link requirement that a business be authorized to use the logo in order to have a listing on the website; the other is that there is no way to verify that the seafood posted on the marketplace is Rhode Island seafood. There are a few options to deal with this inconsistency:**

- Option 1: Don't list the species at all, just the restaurant.**
- Option 2: Send out a letter to those businesses that have submitted listings, explaining a definition of seafood that is consistent with the proposed regulatory definition of Rhode Island seafood.**

**It was decided to have a temporary subcommittee to address this issue.**

**Video project -- Sarah Schumann explained that the video project is ongoing. Anyone interested in participating in a 3-minute YouTube video should get in touch with Sarah. Videos have two purposes: to promote Rhode Island seafood businesses (and Rhode Island seafood in general) and to teach consumers a seafood preparation skill that they can use at home and that will make them more comfortable serving seafood.**

## **4. ROUNDTABLE**

**Next steps:**



- Subcommittee will be formed to address marketplace/logo issue.
- A group of us will flesh out the outline for the report to the General Assembly.
- April 16th meeting is cancelled. We'll try to get together in late May.

#### **Other updates:**

- Ernest Julian announced that DOH is going to help with a story on farmers markets for a TV station. DOH and DEM are coordinating a farmers' market conference on April 16th.
- Shellfish Management Plan: Hiro Uchida announced that he is leading an economic analysis of Rhode Island shellfish marketing. The goal of this project is to understand the seasonal market for quahogs and how it is affected by substitution. The main focus is on how the ex-vessel price for quahogs is affected by volume (because supply fluctuates). On the demand side, the study will examine how much of an inclination there is substitute one species for another. One speedbump that the group has hit already is that there is not much data on farmed species. Because of confidentiality, the researchers can only obtain annual data. This means that they won't be able to analyze farmed species, unless the growers are willing to share that data. The portion of the study focusing on wild-caught shellfish has an estimated completion date around the end of the summer. It was decided to add shellfish marketing as a dedicated agenda item for the next meeting of the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative.

- **Mike Walker announced that the state got a \$1.9 million grant to do a new economic development plan, a new housing plan, and a new sustainability plan. The HUD is looking for broad input and contributions to this plan. Mike suggested that seafood interests should get involved; he will help plug participants into the public comment process.**
- **Mike McGiveney encouraged the Collaborative to consider measures addressing the low price of big quahogs.**
- **Lori Pivarnik announced that Bill Idell at JWU is coordinating a chowder cook-off in October, where students will compete and will learn about Rhode Island seafood. It will be a culmination to a week of events of seafood education.**